

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 NEA-10 ISO-00 EURE-00 IO-13 CIAE-00

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INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 28039

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR FT FR ET SO

SUBJECT: ELYSEE VIEWS ON DJIBOUTI

SUMMARY: THE FRENCH ARE TRYING TO PERSUADE ALI AREF NOT TO OPPOSE THE FTAI GOVERNMENT. THE TASK OF APPLYING THE NEW NATIONALITY CRITERIA IN DJIBOUTI WILL PROBABLY DELAY THE REFERENDUM UNTIL APRIL, AND INDEPENDENCE UNTIL OCTOBER 1977. THE ELYSEE IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBLITY OF AN IMMEDIATE POST-INDEPENDENCE ETHIOPIAN PREEMPTIVE ATTACK. THE FRENCH STILL HOPE TO MAINTAIN A MILITARY PRESENCE AFTER INDEPENDENCE BUT A REVIVAL OF TERRORISM OR OPEN FIGHTING WOULD CHANGE THE WHOLE PICTURE. EQYPT AND SAUDI
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ARABIA HAVE PERMISSION TO OPEN COUSULATES IN DJIBOUTI.

END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENTIAL AFRICAN ADVISOR RENE JOURNIAC TOLD EMBOFF SEPTEMBER 23 THAT FRENCH EFFORTS IN THE FTAI ARE CURRENTLY CENTERED ON PERSUADING ALI AREF AND HIS AFAR FOLLOWERS TO END THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE KAMIL GOVERNMENT AND ON APPLYING TO THE RESIDENTS OF THE TERRITORY THE NATIONALITY CRITERIA AGREED TO LAST JUNE INPARIS. THE FRENCH HOPE, WITHOUT MUCH CONFIDENCE, THAT DURING THE "PRIVATE" VISIT ALI AREF IS NOW MAKING TO FRANCE THEY CAN CONVINCE HIM THAT HIS, AND AFAR INTERESTS WOULD BE SERVED BY RALLYING TO, OR AT LEAST NOT OPPOSING, KAMIL.

2. THE NATIONALITY PROBLEM, WITH ITS DIRECT EFFECTS ON THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS, IS CAUSING MANY HEADACHES, JOURNIAC SAID. BOTH THE SOMALIS AND EHTIOPIANS ARE ENCOURAGING THERI ETHNICALLY RELATED NATIONALS WHO HAVE NEVER LIVED IN THE TERRITORY TO MOVE THERE. SINCE VITAL STATISTICS CAME LATE TO DJIBOUTI, THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING APPLICANTS' RIGHTS TO FRENCH (FTAI) NATIONALITY IS ARDUOUS. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S STAFF HAD BEEN AUGMENTED TO CARRY OUT THIS TASK WHICH JOURNIAC EXPECTS WON'T BE COMPLETED BEFORE MARCH.

E. IN CONSEQUENCE, HE SAID, THE REFERENDUM IS NOW PLANNED FOR LATE MARCH OR APRIL 1977, WHITH INDEPENDENCE LIKELY TO BE DELAYED UNTIL LATE 1977, PROBABLY OCTOBER. JOURNIAC AGREED THAT THIS DELAY WOULD GIVE PERHAPS VITAL ADDITIONAL TIME FOR KAMIL TO GATHER THE BROADER SUPPORT HE WILL NEED IF HIS GOVERNMENT IS TO SURVIVE AFTER INDEPENDENCE.

4. JOURNIAC GAVE HIS PERSONAL VIEW THAT THE GREATEST DANGER FOR A NEW FTAI STATE (WERE ALL FRENCH FORCES WITHDRAWN) IS A PREEMPTIVE MOVE BY ETHIOPIA JUST AFTER INDEPENDENCE. SINCE THE FRENCH DROPPED ALI AREF LAST JUNE, THE ETHIOPIANS HAVE BEEN EVEN MORE SUSPICIOUS OF FRENCH MOTIVES. DESPITE REPEATED ASSURANCES TO THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT ("IF THE DIRG CAN BE CALLED A GOVERNMENT"), JOURNIAC FELT THAT ADDIS STILL BELIEVES CONFIDENTIAL

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THE FRENCH INTEND TO ESTABLISH A PHANTOM REGIME WHICH WILL JOIN SOMALIA AAS SOON AS THE FRENCH LEAVE. MORE-OVER, ETHIOPIA'S INTERNAL TROUBLES MAY TEMPT THE REGIME TO FOREIGN ADVENTURE. GIVEN OUR ONCE INFLUENTIAL POSITION INADDIS, JOURNIAC WOUNDERED ALOUD WHETHER THERE WAS ANY POSSIBILITY FOR THE U.S. TO REASSURE ETHIOPIA ABOUT THE SINCERITY OF THE FRENCH DESIRE TO CREATE A VIABLE STATE.

5. JOURNIAC INDICATED THAT THE FRENCH STILL WANT TO MAINTAIN A MILITARY PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI FOR TWO TO FIVE YEARS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE STABILITY FOR THE NEW REGIME TO TAKE ROOT. SOMALIA, OF COURSE, AND ETHIOPIA, LESS LOGICALLY, ARE OPPOSED BUT THE MAJORITY OF OTHER AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS FAVOR, AT LEAST IN PRIVATE, A CONTINUING FRENCH ROLE. THE WHOLE PICTURE WOULD CHANGE, HE CAUTIONED, WERE TERRORISM OR FIGHTING TO BREAK OUT AND LEAD TO THE LOSS OF FRENCH LIVES.

6. REPLYING TO A QUESTION, JOURNIAC SAID THAT THE FRENCH HAVE GRANTED PERMISSION FOR EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA TO OPEN CONSULATES AT DJIBOUTI. A LIBYAN REQUEST WAS TURNED DOWN ON THE PRETEXT THAT FOR THE MOMENT, ONLY RED SEA STATES HAVE A LEGITIMATE INTEREST IN A POST IN THE FTAL.

7. COMMENT: JOURNIAC CLEARLY WISHED TO PUT THE BEST FACE POSSIBLE ON FRENCH EFFORTS WHICH APPEAR TO BE BASED ON AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN THE HORN VERY CLOSE TO OUR OWN. WHILE WE THINK THE FRENCH ARE SINCERE AND MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, THEIR SUCCESS, AS JOURNIAC CAUTIONED, DEPENDS LARGELY ON THE UNLIKELY PROSPECT THAT THERE WILL BE NO FUTURE ATTACKS ON FRENCH PERSONNEL.

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